

Lesson Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

Lesson ID: 04850-18276

Title: DIRECT FIRE PGM CAPABILITY FOR AH-1W

Operation/Exercise Name: ATLANTIC SURGE 98

Observed: 02 Apr 1998

Originator: HML/A-269

POC: CAPT POLLARD Commercial: (910)450-6884 DSN: 7506884

5. (U) OBSERVATION:

A direct fire PGM capability, as found in the TOW missile, is absolutely critical for rotary wing attack helicopter support of the Ground Combat Element (GCE), especially in an urban environment.

6. (U) DISCUSSION:

Urban Warrior Limited Objective Experiment #2 provided an opportunity to practice new tactics integrating HML/A assets in support of Marines in urban terrain. It was concluded during these exercises that the optimum positions for helicopters resided in the perimeter of the city and at a higher altitude, out of range of small arms fire. The need for precision attacks upon called targets near the specific area of operation still existed, though, which led to the very common use of TOW missiles. The other PGM available, the Hellfire missile, was rarely used for the following reasons: presence of battlefield obscuration and smoke (thereby inhibiting laser spot), weather cloud ceilings, realistic rules of engagement that specify minimum collateral damage within the city, and extra time needed to set up a successful Hellfire shot (relative to a TOW shot.) On the contrary, the TOW missile represented an extremely quick, short range, precision weapon that did not create excessive collateral damage and was not dependent upon any other factor or system other than the ability to visually acquire the target.

7. (U) LESSON LEARNED:

A direct fire PGM for the AH-1W is an extremely high priority. It is most often the weapon of choice in an urban environment. Without such a weapon, a wide gap will be created in the type and amount of support that can be potentially provided in such a situation.

8. (U) RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Ensure that APW identifies and establishes a program to create and procure a direct weapons capability for the AH-1W to field on the aircraft before the TOW inventory is depleted, to include both the 2BW and 4BW programs.

9. (U) COMMENTS:

As of this time, no weapons plan has been established. As current TOW shelf lives expire, it is imperative that a blueprint for the creation, funding, and procurement of direct fire PGMs for the AH-1W is created now for the next 8-10 years so that the

community does not find itself without such a crucial capability. This is of the highest priority.

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